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Historical Sketch of Forty Years

1870-1910

By

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the Presbyterian Church
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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FORTY YEARS

(Written for the Annual Meeting of the Women's Board of Foreign Missions, held in the University Place Church, New York, April 27th, 1910.)

WE meet to-day and celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Women's Board of Foreign Missions. Forty years "with the good hand of our God upon us." No halt, no retrenchment, but only a steady progress in the work of missions—this is our record—and we offer our thanks to Him who has honored us by calling us to work in His vineyard. The young wife of the cavalry officer on our western plains, when she saw the appalling spiritual destitution of the region and sent home the plea that some effort should be made to send the Gospel thither, little thought as she threw that stone that its ripple would spread until the waves of missionary progress would encircle the whole earth. And she still lives to see what God hath wrought. This little band, "The New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado Missionary Association," formed an appropriate nucleus for the distinctly Presbyterian Society formed in 1870, with the title, "The Ladies' Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church," auxiliary to the Home and Foreign Boards, and laboring in both fields. Representatives from the different Presbyterian churches in New York City formed the Board of Managers, with Auxiliary Societies in their respective churches, and in addition to these were 21 Auxiliaries in different localities. Among these original managers were many sainted women—Mrs. Horace

Holden, Mrs. William E. Dodge, Mrs. R. R. Booth, Mrs. Sheafe, Miss Kennedy, Mrs. C. P. Hartt, Mrs. Loring Andrews, Mrs. Robert Kelly. The first report shows 48 Auxiliaries, 9 Missionaries, 6 Bible Readers, and receipts, \$7,747.00. To-day we have 34 Presbyterial Societies, 904 Women's Auxiliary Societies, 1,299 Young People's Societies and Mission Bands; while we are supporting 129 Missionaries, taking part in many Mission Stations, and our receipts this year are \$114,868.17. While we realize that the work of missions cannot be reckoned by a money value, that God will number many unknown jewels in the last great accounting; yet it will interest us to note that in these 40 years we have raised over two million dollars for Foreign Missions.

For 13 years the Ladies' Board of Missions pursued its double work for Home and Foreign Missions, gaining constantly new auxiliaries. In 1875 were formed 3 Presbyterial Societies, to which organizations conformable to our Presbyterian forms of order, report the Auxiliaries in each Presbytery, thus giving an opportunity of closer oversight of individual societies and a more intimate knowledge of the needs of each society and greatly lessening the labors at Headquarters. It was in 1883 that the first great change came into the scope of our work—the relinquishment of all work in the Home Missions Department. This was a great grief to our President, Mrs. Graham, who, with many of the Managers, was loth to give up that phase of the work which had been the original cause of this missionary organization. But it was felt that an individual aim would produce greater concentration and larger results, and accordingly at the annual meeting held at Rochester and at an adjourned meeting in this city the Ladies' Board decided to transfer its

Home Mission Department to the care of the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions. As we look at the glorious work of this Home Missions Board we can but feel that the wisdom of this radical change has been justified. The reorganized Society at this time adopted a more comprehensive constitution under the title of the "Women's Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, New York," and has since labored exclusively in Foreign Mission fields. In May, 1885, the Women's Board became an incorporated body, capable of holding property and receiving legacies. The next important change, or rather growth, came in 1908 when we were privileged to welcome into our ranks 9 Presbyterial Societies, 2 from Kentucky (formerly connected with the Cumberland Board), 3 Presbyterial Societies of Northern New Jersey, which, because of their proximity to the Headquarters in New York City, felt that they more naturally belonged to our Board and were most cordially transferred from the Philadelphia Board, and 4 Presbyterial Societies which had previously formed the Board of Northern New York. This accession has proved delightful and stimulating to all, and includes the Synods of New York and Kentucky.

During these 40 years the Women's Board has had 3 Presidents, devout women raised up of the Lord, with varying gifts and characteristics, each one thoroughly adapted for the distinct periods of our existence. Our first President, Mrs. James Lorimer Graham, was a woman of large mental grasp, with enthusiasm and initiative, far-seeing and undaunted by the magnitude of the task undertaken for the first time by the women of the Presbyterian Church. For 13 years she devoted almost every hour of her time to the interests of the Society, inspiring many to unite in the work,

bringing to bear her many gifts of social position. She kept every detail of the work in her mind and maintained an enormous correspondence—a loving friend to all our missionaries, admired and beloved by all with whom she came in contact. Her death, occurring in the early part of the year 1883, was a great loss to the Society, but at once her place was ably filled by Mrs. O. P. Hubbard, whose qualifications enabled her to guide the enlarging group of auxiliaries into larger channels and to lay foundations wide and deep, equal to any superstructure. This was the period of constructive formation and wisely and well was this done under our second President, who, alas! was only granted to us for four years. In 1888 Mrs. Henry N. Beers became the President. Of deep spirituality, calm and wise judgment, with fine tact, she led the ranks, guiding the various departments of our work with happy skill. After rounding out twenty years of faithful service Mrs. Beers felt that advancing years precluded her from active work and she declined a re-nomination, but until her death, the following year, maintained her deep interest and took up committee work with loving devotion. Upon her resignation the present President was elected—Mrs. W. Packer Prentice, who having been the first Secretary of the New Mexico Association, is now, in point of service upon the Board, the oldest manager.

We would briefly refer to the Magazines edited by our Board: In 1871 was issued the first number of "Our Mission Field," which, in 1885, was united with the Magazine of the Philadelphia Society and Northwest Board, called, "Woman's Work for Woman," under the title of "Woman's Work for Woman and Our Mission Field." Later the title became "Woman's Work, a Foreign Missions Magazine," and this publication, ably edited by

Miss Ellen C. Parsons, is of the greatest usefulness in inciting interest and conveying information of our many mission stations. A magazine for children was started in 1885, called "Children's Work for Children," which, in 1893, took the title of "Over Sea and Land" and became the organ of both the Home and the Foreign Women's Societies, and has very recently transferred its headquarters from Philadelphia to New York. In addition to these publications is now yearly issued "The Year Book of Prayer," wherein a day is assigned to every missionary for loving thought and earnest prayer by those at home. Our Publication Committee is becoming more active with each year, many leaflets, circulars, helps to study, etc., being published constantly.

It is of interest to note that our 40th anniversary is being held in this University Place Church, where many of the first meetings of the Society were held, whose pastor at that time, Rev. Robert Russell Booth, was one of the ablest advisers of the new organization; where was held our 25th anniversary; the church where three of our Presidents, Mrs. Graham, Mrs. Hubbard and Mrs. Prentice have been members, and whose present pastor, Dr. George Alexander, is himself the President of the Board of Foreign Missions.

During the first years of the Society, meetings were held in the apartment of Mrs. Graham, in West 10th Street; upon her death a room was rented in the handsome house on Washington Square, which had been for many years the home of the Grahams. But when the Foreign Board removed from Centre Street, in 1888, to the commodious mansion, 53 Fifth Avenue, which had been given to the Missionary Boards of the Presbyterian Church through the munificence of Mr. Robert Lenox, the Ladies' Board was given pleasant quarters there. This move was followed by another

when the Presbyterian Building at 156 Fifth Avenue was completed, and now we have delightful rooms and accommodations, with the Assembly Room for our meetings, and where it is possible to consult with the Secretaries of the Board without delay.

During these forty years we have supported a long list of missionaries, increasing their number year by year. Our Foreign Secretaries are in close correspondence with these, our dear missionary sisters, and thus not only strengthen and cheer them, but receive the news from the field which is the reward of our efforts and the stimulus to new enterprise, and through the Bureau of Exchange these missionary letters are sent to all our Constituents for their encouragement and use in meetings. For a long time we gave out to the Auxiliaries, for their special work, Bible readers and scholars, or scholarships, but for several years we have adopted what is known as the "Station Plan." We found that often a Bible Reader was transferred, the scholars died or were married, and that a continuity of interest was better preserved, even if a little of the personal element was lost, by having the Auxiliaries give their contributions to the mission station which appealed most strongly to their interest. Then when word comes of any part of the work of their station, they receive the account of the larger work and gain in knowledge and interest. This seems to be the nearest approach to the ideal of giving indefinitely "to the cause," which is possible to our human desire for the concrete, and our experience of its usefulness has justified this plan.

Time would fail to tell all of the many different objects to which we have sent our contributions in these 40 years, suffice it to give some items under various heads. We have given medical education to three stu-

dents, who have done good work upon the field and have assisted others. We have aided in building and keeping up many chapels. We have bought land and built houses for missionaries in numerous countries; also houses for native helpers and have kept them in repair. Among the missionary homes are those for the Bernheisels, in Korea; for the Palmers, in Laos; for the Silsbys, in China, and for the Labarees, in Urumia, Persia.

Medical work always appeals to every human heart and we have been able to assist in many missionary dispensaries, providing equipment and various forms of relief and improvement to this kind of work, which has proved so successful, not only in winning souls to Christ while aiding their wretched bodies, but in presenting to heathendom a striking object-lesson of what Christianity stands for in the world.

We have built and furnished hospitals at Hengchow, China, and at Chieng Mai, Laos, and dispensaries at Urumia and Hamadan, Persia; Batanga, Africa, and Tsinanfu, China. Many years ago the Sara Seward Hospital at Allahabad, India, and more recently, the Rose Bachman Hospital at Tsining-Chou, China, were entirely the work of this Board, as was also the Anna Jacobson Memorial Home at Seoul, Korea.

Most naturally the care of schools would fall appropriately to woman's work and we have been privileged to build schools, enlarge and repair them. Long have we loved Graham Seminary at Tokyo, Japan, started by our Miss Youngman in 1872 and, in 1890, united with the Bancho School for Girls, under the name of Joshi Gakuin. A new Graham Dormitory replaces the one burned in 1906. Miss Youngman also started the Training School at Tokyo, now known as the Bible Institute.

We have founded schools at Petchaburee, Siam; at Guatemala City; at Urumia, Persia, and at Hamadan, Persia, we have cared for the Faith Hubbard School and have also bought property for the Boys' School. We are now enlarging Miss Sara C. Smith's long-established school at Sapporo, Japan, and are assisting in the Boys' Schools at Sidon and at Tripoli, Syria. While we cannot omit to speak of our interest in schools for the Blind and Deaf, the Hoshyarpore Orphanage, etc. Our Board entirely built and equipped the school at Peking which was destroyed in the Boxer rebellion, but the school was afterwards transferred to Paotingfu. The Arthur Mitchell Memorial Fund for a new station at Praa, Laos, and the Ellinwood Training School in the Philippines, have claimed our interest and help.

That we have not omitted to think of the physical needs of our noble missionaries, laboring amid great climatic disadvantages to the utmost limit of their health and strength, is shown by our contributing homes for summer resort, such as the Nourmahal Summer Home at Hamadan, and the old Temple bought and fitted up near Peking, for the same purpose.

It goes without saying that much money has been raised for the outfit and travelling expenses for outgoing missionaries.

The Children's Bands have supplied boats for use in travelling up and down the rivers, sometimes the only highways for Siam and Africa, and wells have been dug and conduits made to furnish pure water to many Stations, and a sawmill constructed at Chieng Mai.

We do not attempt the necrology for 40 years, we can only give thanks for the long line of devoted and saintly women who have labored in the Lord with us, but we cannot

omit to mention our losses in the past year and to place a wreath of affectionate honor upon the names of Mrs. Henry N. Beers, our President for 20 years, and of Miss Mary Parsons, a manager almost from the beginning of this Board, who, by her literary abilities and inspiring energy, was of signal usefulness to the cause.

As we review briefly the work of the past, mingled feelings are ours—we realize our shortcomings, our want of faith sometimes to go forward, our mistakes, our failure to meet opportunities shining before us—and for these we humbly implore our Father's forgiveness; and we see that God has given us courage, has helped us to do many things in His name, and for this we offer our deepest thanks, and as we enter upon another period of missionary service we dedicate ourselves anew to the God-given work of proclaiming Christ to our heathen sisters. May we rise to the great task, may we "sound out the word of the Lord" that many may be "turned from idols to serve the living and true God."

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